

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, FRANKLIN HISTORIAN

by

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PREFACE

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This study is an attempt to evaluate the work of Theodore Roosevelt on the frontier state of Franklin. A chapter of fifty pages on this temporary commonwealth was included in the third volume of The Winning of the West, published in 1894. The set eventually contained four volumes and was history of the frontier from 1763 through 1807.

It was necessary to devote proportionately more time to the study of the history of Franklin than is reflected in the few pages included under that heading in this thesis. Before attempting to evaluate Roosevelt as a Franklin historian, one has to understand the history of the state of Franklin.

This is not an attempt to identify Roosevelt as the historian of the state of Franklin, but to look at his chapter on this "fourteenth commonwealth" in light of his writings of the frontier. What were his chief interests in this field of the westward movement of American History? What topics were of most interest to him and which received the greatest emphasis in his study? Did he grasp the importance of this attempt at frontier government in relation to its broader significance to American history? What are the opinions of other scholars on this history of the West? By understanding the answers to these questions, we may be able to understand the competence of Roosevelt's chapter on the state of Franklin, not merely as an historian of the state but as a narrative historian of the frontier.

From the study made, it is concluded that there was a general pattern to the writing of this frontier history and the state of Franklin fell properly into the niche provided for it. Not that Roosevelt saw it in its relative position to comprehensive history, but that it was part of a romantic period of the society of that day in its westward movement.

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CHAPTER I

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE STATE OF FRANKLIN

American frontier history has been spiced by the repeated instances of the frontiersmen themselves taking the initiative in the erection of local governments. Of these governments, formed by no other authority than that of the people directly concerned, one of the most noteworthy is that of the state of Franklin. It was maintained for about three years against the authority of the parent state, North Carolina. The movement could not justly be called a rebellion, however, as it was not begun until the settlers thought themselves abandoned and left without any government. Seven years before, they had gladly given up their first independent association and accepted the authority of North Carolina.¹

This summary of Franklin history is not an attempt to bring to light the original documents of that period. In order to understand this historical commonwealth from various viewpoints, including the Roosevelt chapter, numerous sources, other than original documents and papers, were used. This aided in keeping the summary brief and pointed the study along the intended route, which was to determine the competency of Roosevelt in this particular area of history. Since the basic facts of Franklin's origin and decline are not in dispute, the first section of this paper has been treated lightly.

¹ George Henry Alden, "The State of Franklin," American Historical Review, VIII (January, 1903), 271.

The eastern part of what is now Tennessee consisted of a great hill-strewn, forest-clad valley, running from northeast to southwest, closed in on one side by the Cumberland, and on the other by the Unaka and Great Smoky Mountains. Of these two, the Unaka Range separates the valley from North Carolina. The Clinch, the Holston, the Watauga, the Nolichucky, and the French Broad arise in this valley and with other lesser streams make the Tennessee River. The upper end of the valley lies in southwestern Virginia, the head-waters of some of the rivers being well within that state; and though the province was really a part of North Carolina, it was separated therefrom by high mountain chains, while from Virginia it was easy to follow the watercourses down the valley. So, as elsewhere among the mountains forming the western frontier, the first movements of population went parallel with, rather than across, the various ranges. As in western Virginia the first settlers came, for the most part, from Pennsylvania, so, in turn, in what was then western North Carolina, and is now eastern Tennessee, the first settlers came mainly from Virginia, and, indeed, in a great part, from this same Pennsylvanian stock. Of course, in each case there was also a very considerable movement directly westward. Theodore Roosevelt footnoted his discussion of population movement by saying that the first settlers on the Watauga included both Carolinians and Virginians.² A large number of the Wataugans were Regulators

² Theodore Roosevelt, The Winning of the West (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1891), I, 168.

who had fled westward across the mountains after the Battle of the Alamance. Other settlers came as the result of the treaties concerning the western boundary of white settlement which Virginia, North Carolina, and the British government concluded with the Cherokee. After the Treaty of Hard Labour in 1768 and the Treaty of Lochaber, South Carolina, in 1770, a line was surveyed and it was discovered that the Wataugans had settled not within the bounds of Virginia as they believed, but within those of North Carolina. Feeling now that their residence was insecure, the Wataugans decided to purchase land from the Cherokee. For nearly six thousand dollars in merchandise and some muskets and household articles, the Cherokee leased to the Watauga settlers for a period of ten years all the country on the river.³

Of the men who settled in the Watauga area, two were destined for the next thirty years to play the chief roles in the history of that portion of the Southwest which, largely, through their own efforts, became the State of Tennessee. These two men were James Robertson and John Sevier.⁴

Robertson first came to Watauga in the spring of 1770.⁵ He had taken the trip by himself from Orange County, North Carolina, to find a new residence for his family. He stayed long enough to build a hut and plant a crop of corn. He then returned home

³ John Anthony Caruso, The Appalachian Frontier (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959), pp. 107-108.

⁴ Roosevelt, I, 176-177.

⁵ Ibid.

and brought back to the Watauga country sixteen persons including his brother Charles. Each family cleared a piece of land and built a cabin around Sycamore Shoals of the Watauga where Elizabethton, Tennessee, now stands. This became the center of the Watauga settlements and Robertson's steadfastness, unbounding energy, and unusual common sense soon made him the leader of the settlers in the region.⁶

Robertson in due time, was to leave the Watauga settlements and establish the Cumberland settlements around Nashborough. The principal leader then became John Sevier, a member of the first committee of the Watauga Association, representative in the Provincial Congress and first Constitutional Convention of North Carolina, governor of the state of Franklin, first and six times governor of Tennessee, four-term member of the United States Congress, one of the leading commanders in the Battle of King's Mountain, and military chieftain in the wars against the Indians of the southern mountains in which he fought thirty-five battles. An account of his life covers the history of the state of Franklin and the early history of the State of Tennessee.⁷ Born September 23, 1745, in Rockingham County, Virginia, he was educated at Staunton and Fredericksburg. Married at sixteen, he had already founded the village of New Market before his twentieth birthday. After several visits to the frontier settlements he

⁶ Caruso, p. 105.

⁷ William Brewster, The Fourteenth Commonwealths (Philadelphia: MacManus, 1960), p. 160.

settled temporarily on the Watauga and then in 1778 he secured a large plantation in present Washington County on the Nolachucky River which gave him the popular nickname of "Nolachucky Jack."⁸

As time went along and the population increased, the problems of local government became more acute. The majority of the inhabitants were law-abiding people but as usually happens in a frontier society, far removed from justice, there were some residents who were there to escape punishment for crimes committed farther east. Moreover, a few societies, however law abiding can long exist without some type of regulatory government, the probating of wills, the recording of deeds, and other necessary records. With this in mind, the settlers determined to organize a government of their own. This Watauga Association was formed in 1772.⁹ These Wataugans agreed to adopt written articles of agreement, by which their conduct should be governed; and these were known as the Articles of the Watauga Association.¹⁰ They formed a written constitution, the first ever adopted on a western frontier, or by a community composed of American free-born men. It is this fact of the early independence and self-government of the settlers along the water sources of the Tennessee Valley that gives to their history its peculiar importance. They were the first American born men to "establish a free and

⁸ Ibid., p. 161. Spelling of this river and nickname is exactly as given in this source.

⁹ Ibid., p. 162.

¹⁰ Roosevelt, I, 183.

independent community on the continent."¹¹

Unfortunately, the original articles of agreement are lost,¹² but the government established in that manner was well enough organized to remain in operation for nearly six years. Thirteen commissioners were elected and from their group, five were chosen to be an executive committee, or court, among them Sevier and Robertson. This court met at stated and regular times and followed its procedure according to the law of Virginia. They took care of the registration of deeds and wills, issued marriage licenses, settled questions of debt, and set forth a vigorous program against law-breakers, especially horse-thieves.¹³

At the outbreak of the Revolution the Watauga settlers petitioned the Provincial Council of North Carolina to extend its government to their community.¹⁴ In the latter part of 1777, North Carolina formed the Washington District into a county of the same name which included the area of the present State of Tennessee. Early in the following year, the governor of North Carolina appointed justices of the peace and militia officers for the new county. The old system of government came to an end, but the majority of the new offices were filled by the men who had held the office under the Watauga Association. The Wataugans

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 185.

¹³ Ibid., p. 186.

¹⁴ Frederick Jackson Turner, "Western State Making in the Revolutionary Era," American Historical Review, I (October, 1895), 76.

had completed a new chapter in the westward advance of American nationality.

During the Revolution and after, the population of the Watauga settlements increased so rapidly that four counties were established in the trans-mountain area. All of these counties sent men to the North Carolina legislature, at Hillsboro; but they found that body little disposed to work out the problems of an area so remote.

The Congress of the new republic was also powerless to command. It was the representative of a league of sovereign states. And these states, jealous of each other, had now assumed their respective positions of independent sovereignties. To replenish its exhausted treasury and revive its waning credit, the Congress asked such of the states as possessed vacant lands to cede them to the United States, to be employed in providing funds to liquidate the public debt.¹⁵

North Carolina as a state was very poor, and most of the eastern legislators regarded the western settlements as heavy sources of expense. The little pioneer communities had contracted Indian war debts with the faith that the legislature would provide for them; but the payment did not come and no measures were taken to provide for the protection of the frontier in the future. No provisions were made for the extension of legal protection of the state courts over the western counties, and they became a haven

¹⁵ "Early Secessionists," Harper's, March, 1862, p. 516. No author given for this early article.

for criminals, who could be dealt with only as the settlers acted on their own initiative, without the sanction of the law. This would seem to indicate that the settlers were left to themselves, to work out their own problems as they saw fit; and as they bore most of the burdens of independence, they began to long for the privileges.¹⁶

On April 19, 1784, the North Carolina assembly, meeting in Hillsboro, introduced a bill consenting to the cession of western lands. Passed on June 2, it stated that Congress, upon accepting the cession, should recognize the value of the ceded land in proportioning the Revolutionary War debt, and should lay out the region into a state or states to be admitted into the Union with the provision that slavery would not be prohibited save by the assembly of the state or states thus formed. Congress was to accept the cession within a year. A few days later the assembly passed legislation which declared that no change should be made in the government of the cession until adopted by Congress.¹⁷

The western members in attendance voted in favor of the cession and then returned to their homes to tell the frontier families that they now might be political orphans. The general feeling was that they must organize for their own protection. The three counties on the upper Tennessee began their proceedings immediately. The Cumberland people, or Davidson County, took no

¹⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, The Winning of the West (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1894), III, 156.

¹⁷ Samuel Cole Williams, History of the Lost State of Franklin (Johnson City, Tenn.: Watauga Press, 1924), p. 24.

part in the separatist movement. Removed many miles from the Holston settlements, they had no ties with them. For some time the Cumberlanders had handled their own affairs and looked with disfavor on any movement toward better government that was not of their own making.¹⁸

The militia was the best organized part of this frontier society, so it took the initiative and elected two men from each captain's company who met in their respective counties and chose delegates to a general convention to be held at Jonesboro.¹⁹ This convened August 23, 1784, and was composed of most of the prominent and influential leaders of what is now East Tennessee. The convention chose John Sevier, president, and Landon Carter, clerk; and appointed eleven of its members as a committee on public affairs. Various resolutions were passed as relative to their independence and their relations with Virginia, North Carolina, and the Congress of the United States. The convention adjourned after providing for the calling of a new convention. It was to consist of five delegates chosen from each county, who should give a name to the state and prepare for its constitution.²⁰ The second convention met in November, 1784, several weeks after the time set for it, and broke up in confusion because of differences of opinions on announcing complete or partial independence.

¹⁸ Roosevelt, III, 156.

¹⁹ Brewster, p. 175.

²⁰ Roosevelt, III, 158.

In October of 1784, the legislature of North Carolina, informed of these secession movements, entertained and acted upon the propositions of a compromise. The party, opposed to the organization of the new state, was strengthened by the actions of the general assembly. The assembly repealed the Cession Act, formed a judicial district of the western counties, appointed an assistant judge and attorney general for the Superior Court, and commissioned Colonel Sevier a brigadier general of the militia.²¹ It does not seem likely that Sevier knew of this appointment when, at the election of the third convention, he made a speech against the new state movement.²²

The convention came together again on December 14, 1784, and took measures to assume the power of full statehood. The constitution was similar to that of North Carolina and provided for a Senate and a House of Commons, to form the legislative assembly, which should itself choose the governor. By resolution they provided that the government should go into effect, and elections be held at once. Yet, along with this, they directed that a convention should be elected to meet at Greenville, November 14, 1785, to revise, reject, or adopt the constitution now in force.

Elections for the assembly of the new state were duly held and in March, 1785, the two houses met. Sevier was chosen governor; courts were organized; civil and military offices were

²¹ Harper's, March, 1862, p. 517.

²² Alden, American Historical Review, VIII (January, 1903), 275.

set up; taxes were levied; and a number of laws enacted. One of the acts was "for the promotion of learning in the County of Washington."²³ Under it, Martin Academy, the first academy west of the mountains was established by Rev. Samuel Doak, who was born of Scotch Irish ancestry in Augusta County, Virginia. He graduated from Princeton College and became the pioneer of education west of the mountains.²⁴ It is no small credit to the frontiersmen that in this new state they attempted to furnish their sons the necessities of obtaining a higher education.

During this meeting of the legislature the authorities of the new state sent a memorial to the Congress of the United States. William Cocke had been appointed Franklin's representative to Congress and he immediately departed for New York, where, in May, 1785, he presented the memorial to that body. Many of the chief grievances were recited against North Carolina, especially the Indian problems, and the cession and repeal acts. It was stated that it was the earnest desire of the people of Franklin to be admitted as a state of the Federal Union. Congress took no action either for or against the new commonwealth.

On November 14, 1785, the Constitutional Convention met in the crude courthouse in Greeneville to provide a permanent constitution for the state of Franklin. They were by no means a harmonious group. While Sevier and his many friends were desirous of maintaining the independence of Franklin, Colonel John

²³ Roosevelt, III, 160.

²⁴ Brewster, p. 187.

Tipton and his small clique wished to see the region returned to the allegiance of North Carolina. Sevier's popularity and his attainment of the governorship had only increased the jealousy of Tipton. An altercation even took place between the two men at a general muster of the militia which ended in a fist fight, with Tipton winning. His victory made him all the more determined to defeat and humiliate Sevier and to destroy the new state.²⁵

This feud between Sevier and Tipton was personal as well as political. In the 1780 Cherokee war, at the battle of Boyd's Creek, Tipton's younger brother, Jonathan, was an officer under the command of Sevier. The slowness of Major Jonathan Tipton's command in filling a gap in the line, allowed many Indians to escape and caused Sevier to fail in what could have been a resounding victory. John Tipton resented Sevier for poking fun at his brother in regards to this battle.²⁶

With this in mind he was successful in getting one of his followers, a Rev. Samuel Houston, to submit an entirely new constitution. This written constitution, with its bill of rights, was an interesting document. Houston provided that the name be changed from Franklin to Frankland because, he said, the people were as free as the ancient Franks.²⁷ The constitution of Frankland would set up a unicameral legislature and exclude

²⁵ Caruso, p. 294.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 281-282, 294.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 295.

ministers of the gospel, medical doctors, and attorneys at law, from holding office. The exclusion of ministers was a natural precaution against the infringement of full religious freedom, and exclusion of lawyers was a common thing on the frontier. The idea was to prevent any man whose business it was to study the law from having a share in making the law. This constitution had various liberal features, such as the provision of universal suffrage for all free men and freedom of religious worship.²⁸

Long and angry debates broke out in the assembly over this proposed constitution. Each side had propaganda machines working throughout the settlements which started many fights and ended friendships. But Sevier's popularity in the convention was too much for Tipton to overcome. The legislators finally adopted the North Carolina constitution as that of the new commonwealth. Tipton and his friends did not admit defeat, but began to formulate new plans to overthrow Sevier.²⁹

The state of Franklin had now been in working existence for over a year. Many were the problems that the officers had to solve. From time to time, all during this period of frontier history, the Indians had to be driven back, so Sevier and his colleagues took up the musket when necessary. The officials of North Carolina corresponded with Sevier and the other Franklin officials. Governor Alexander Martin was replaced by Governor Richard Caswell. The new governor, associated with Sevier in the

²⁸ Roosevelt, III, 168.

²⁹ Caruso, p. 296.

Muscle Shoals project,³⁰ made known that he favored a more conciliatory feeling toward the rebellious commonwealth. A few days after the adoption of the constitution, the North Carolina Assembly passed, at the request of Governor Caswell, an act that granted pardon to all who would return to the fold of the mother state, and provided for a complete government to be set up to replace the Franklin government. This was a new weapon with which Tipton worked against Sevier. This faction held elections at Sycamore Shoals and elected Tipton to the North Carolina Senate. The entire local government for North Carolina was organized over again in the interest of Tipton and his forces. The two governments clashed in every way. County courts for both groups were held in each county; taxes were levied by both states; the militia was called out by both sets of officers. The North Carolina courts convened at Buffalo and ten miles distant, at Jonesboro, sat the Franklin courts; and each court in turn, was broken up by armed men favoring the opposite party. Throughout 1786 and 1787 the confusion gradually grew worse. Franklin sent William Cooke as an ambassador to argue its case before the assembly of North Carolina; the governors and high officials sent explosive letters and proclamations, and the rival legislatures

³⁰ This was an attempt, from 1783-1789, to control land at Muscle Shoals on the Tennessee River in the present State of Alabama. It was first the enterprise of a private land company; then became part of the expansionist program of the state of Franklin; finally it was the basis of an intrigue between Sevier and the Spanish government. Caswell and Sevier were members of the private land company, along with William Blount, John Donelson, and others.

passed laws meant to tear down each other's influence.³¹

Sevier perceived the sinking fortunes of Franklin and sought aid from many sources. He wrote to Benjamin Franklin for sympathy and advice. He sent appeals to the governor of Georgia for support. He wrote to the malcontents of Western Virginia; and sent men to negotiate for separation with the legislature of the mother state. There was a silent proclamation of neutrality from each contact. Even the Congress of the United States, whose authority the state of Franklin had never denied, refused to seat a delegate from it, who claimed a seat in the Federal council.³²

The state of Franklin stood on the verge of collapse. The last meeting of its assembly was held in September, 1787, and by the end of the year there was not a quorum of delegates to elect a state council but the governor continued to assume his office. Tipton seized on Sevier's downfall to deal him a crushing blow. About the time that this term as governor expired, March 1, 1788, a writ, issued by the old state courts, was executed against his possessions for back North Carolina taxes. Sheriff John Fugh seized all of Sevier's Negro slaves and carried them for safe keeping to Tipton's rambling log buildings on Sinking Creek, east of Jonesboro. Sevier, who had been away fighting the Indians, raised a hundred and fifty men and marched to Tipton's home, bringing a small cannon. For several days there was skirmishing and shouting and shooting, while letters went back

³¹ Roosevelt, III, 171.

³² Harper's, March, 1862, p. 519.

and forth between sides demanding unconditional surrender. Finally, Colonel George Maxwell came to Tipton's rescue and drove away Sevier and his troops by a surprise attack. This scrambling fight was the death blow to Franklin. Sevier escaped to the homes of the frontiersmen who were devoted to him, and soon was engaged with the Indians in another war.³³

The exploits of Sevier during this Indian affair kept him in high regard with the majority of frontiersmen, but finally in July of 1788, Governor Samuel Johnson, the successor to Richard Caswell, ordered that a warrant be issued for his arrest, charging him with high treason. He was eventually taken by the Tipton forces to Morganton, North Carolina, for trial but escaped during the process of the trial. The people of Greene County soon elected Sevier to the senate of North Carolina, whereupon the assembly pardoned him, let him be seated with his colleagues, and honored him with the rank of brigadier general.

Of the many designs for forming new governments west of the Allegheny Mountains, none up to this time had reached the standard attained by this state, formed by the frontiersmen themselves, and maintained for three years against the apathy or admitted opposition of the old states. Its history is perhaps the best picture that can be given of the political conditions existing on the American frontier previous to the adoption of the Constitution. It may be that the problems involved by the state of Franklin would have occurred repeatedly across the frontier,

³³ Roosevelt, III, 185.

with perhaps not always the same outcome, if a better system had not been provided by Congress.³⁴

This summary of the history of the state of Franklin forms the background for our study of Roosevelt as a frontier historian and as a historian of the state of Franklin. It becomes advisable to bring out the opinions of various authors as to the contribution of Roosevelt's works in this phase of American history.

³⁴ Alden, American Historical Review, VIII (January, 1903), 289.

CHAPTER II

THEODORE ROOSEVELT AS A FRONTIER HISTORIAN

At the close of one of the evening sessions of the American Historical Association held in Washington, D.C., in 1889, Theodore Roosevelt of the United States Civil Service Commission, gave an extemporary address concerned with "Certain Phases of the Western Movement during the Revolutionary War."¹ One sentence from the report of this speech shows the impact of the frontier upon Roosevelt's philosophy of the importance of the frontier in American history. "The foundation of the great Federal Republic was laid by backwoodsmen, who conquered and held the land west of the Alleghanies, and thus prepared the way for the continental domination of the English race in America."²

This statement was made in 1889 after the frontier had become a personal lesson to him. Although his attempt to become a ranchman in western Dakota had failed financially, it had given him that personal insight into frontier living that meant so much to him. Roosevelt was to say that had it not been for his life in the Bad Lands he would never have become President.³ An evaluation

¹ Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1889 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1890), p. 12.

² Ibid.

³ Carleton Putnam, Theodore Roosevelt, Vol. I, The Formative Years, 1858-1886 (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 310. Roosevelt to A. T. Volwiler, November 8, 1918. Kansas City Star reprint. Among the papers of Ray Mattison, National Park Historian. Roosevelt made virtually the same remark at Fargo, North Dakota, in September, 1910. Fargo Form & Republican, September 5, 1910.

of this would be almost impossible, but there are a few certain things we can draw from it. The Bad Lands gave him his first prolonged experience with the temper and the physical pressure of the American frontier. "The freedom, the freshness, the farness," as Robert W. Service might have said, with its deep affection upon the human spirit was being added to the young man's outdoor experiences.⁴

Many of the ideas that Roosevelt had of the West became more evident as he began to write. As a youngster he had been an avid reader and as he progressed into maturity the stories of the border, the Indians, the frontiersman, had sown the seed.

After the signing in Dakota of the cattle contract, June 12, 1884, Roosevelt told young Lincoln Lang (son of one of Roosevelt's cattle business managers) that there were two things he desired to do more than anything else, to shoot an antelope and to acquire a buckskin suit. Naturally, the buckskin suit would appeal to his hunting instincts, but there was something more involved. It appealed to his historic sense because "the fringed tunic or hunting shirt, made of buckskin . . . was the most picturesque and distinctively national dress ever worn in America. It was the dress in which Daniel Boone was clad when he first passed through the trackless forests of the Alleghanies . . . it was the dress worn by grim old Davy Crockett when he fell at the Alamo."⁵

⁴ Ibid., p. 311.

⁵ Ibid., p. 454.

Stefan Lorant had this to say about the western influence on Roosevelt:

The extent to which the West shaped Roosevelt's outlook on life is hard to overstate. It had a vast influence on his development. It brought the successful culmination of his quest for extraordinary physical stamina. It gave him a profound appreciation of the importance of frontier life and frontier philosophy in the American character. But the most important lesson was summed up by Roosevelt himself at the turn of the century when he addressed a trainside audience in Bismarck while campaigning for the vice-presidency. 'I studied a lot about men and things before I saw you fellows,' he said, 'but it was only when I came here that I began to know anything or measure men rightly'.⁶

Roosevelt had wanted, from youth, to write a book that would rank as first class. His books on Benton and Morris were by no means without reputation and the Naval War of 1812 set a high criterion. Thomas Hart Benton was written rapidly, with a minimum of research and was not strengthened by citations from primary sources. With his book sent to the publishers, Roosevelt determined that the next historical work would consume more time and be done carefully and thoroughly. But during the year 1887, when this resolve was made, he wrote and published Gouverneur Morris.

Then came The Winning of the West. These volumes were to hold Roosevelt in fascination and cause him to write with his best and most careful effort. In August, 1888, he wrote to Henry Cabot Lodge: "I continue greatly absorbed in my new work; but it goes very slowly; I am only half way through the first volume. I shall

⁶ Stefan Lorant, The Life and Times of Theodore Roosevelt (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), p. 205.

try my best not to hurry it, nor make it a scamp work."⁷ But as the reviews for the first two volumes began to appear, one of the shortcomings of the work appeared to be haste.

Soon after the first two volumes appeared, Atlantic Monthly (William Dean Howells was then editor), asked William Frederick Poole, librarian at the Newberry Library of Chicago, to write a review of the work. Poole accepted the invitation, and his review of approximately five thousand words, unsigned, as was then the rule, was published in the November issue.⁸ Poole gave both praise and criticism in his scholarly review:

In the 'standard histories' of the United States written by Eastern men, very little attention has been given to Western history, and what little there is, is, in the main, inaccurate and superficial.

Mr. Theodore Roosevelt is the latest writer who has entered this field, and his two volumes on The Winning of the West will find many appreciative readers. His style is natural, simple, and picturesque, without any attempt at fine writing, and he does not hesitate to use Western words which have not yet found a place in the dictionary. . . . Few writers of American history have covered a wider or better field of research, or are more in sympathy with the best modern method of studying history from original sources; and yet, in reading his narrative and noting his references, we have a feeling that he might profitably have spent more time in consulting and collating the rich materials to which he had access, and thereby have enlarged his information and modified many of his opinions.

Time is an essential requisite in producing a standard, authoritative historical work. . . . It is evident from these

⁷ William T. Hutchinson (ed.), The Marcus W. Jernegan Essays in American Historiography (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1937), p. 235. "He was at work on it while civil service commissioner at Washington, while police commissioner in New York, and while preparing and publishing other books on history, ranching, and hunting."

⁸ George B. Utley, "Theodore Roosevelt's The Winning of the West: Some unpublished letters," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXX (March, 1944), 495.

volumes that Mr. Roosevelt is a man of ability and of great industry. He has struck out fresh and original thoughts, . . . and has written paragraphs, and some chapters, of singular felicity; and then he has tripped on level ground where there was no need of it. The documents before him, if he had taken time to study them, would have shown him his errors. . . . There are indications in the text before us that copy was sent to the printers as soon as it was written; and hence the seasoning process, which is as essential in historical composition as in woodworking, has been lost. Mr. Roosevelt, in making so good a work, has clearly shown that he could make a better one, if he would take more time in doing it.⁹

Other reviewers were prompt to recognize Roosevelt's first two volumes. Frederick Jackson Turner wrote a three-page article, favorable for the most part, for the August, 1889 number of Francis Fisher Browne's Chicago Dial. On October 26 the London Saturday Review gave the work a full quarto page, as did the Spectator on October 5.¹⁰

The American Historical Review asked Frederick Jackson Turner to review the final volume, Volume IV, of Roosevelt's work. The first two paragraphs of this review were spent on the preceding volumes and again the reviewer both praised and criticized the author:

Mr. Roosevelt has done a real service to our history in his volumes on the West. He has rescued a whole movement in American development from the hands of unskillful annalists; he has made use of widely scattered original sources, not heretofore exploited; and with graphic vigor he has portrayed the advance of the pioneer into the wastes of the continent. He has considered his subject broadly, in its relation to world-history, not in the spirit of a local historian. This is an admirable thing to do; and Mr. Roosevelt's appreciative

⁹ "Roosevelt's The Winning of the West," Atlantic Monthly, November, 1889, pp. 693-694.

¹⁰ Utley, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXX (March, 1944), 496.

sympathy with the frontiersman, due in part to his own Western experiences, has enabled him to depict the movement as probably no other man of his time could have done.

He handles the subject with dash and lightness, of touch; and sometimes this facility shows itself in a readiness to pass over institutional development with a comment of praise or blame, instead of information that the reader has a right to expect. He frequently fails to work his subject out into less obvious relations; and the marks of actual haste are plain in careless proof-reading and citations.¹¹

William Roscoe Thayer had this to say about the popularity of The Winning of the West: "I suppose that in them Roosevelt did more than any other writer to popularize the study of the historical origin and development of the vast region west of the Alleghanies which now forms a vital part of the American Republic."¹²

Archibald Henderson offered this evaluation of Roosevelt's western history: "A stirring recital with chief stress thrown upon the militant characteristics of the frontiersman, is open to grave criticism because of failure to give adequate account of social and economic tendencies, the development of democracy, and the evolution of government under the pressure of frontier conditions."¹³

Frederick Jackson Turner gave this feeling toward the western volumes in a paragraph from The Frontier in American History:

¹¹ Frederick Jackson Turner, Review of The Winning of the West, by Theodore Roosevelt, American Historical Review, II (October, 1896), 171.

¹² William Roscoe Thayer, Theodore Roosevelt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), p. 74.

¹³ Archibald Henderson, The Conquest of the Old Southwest (New York: Century, 1920), p. 351.

In his 'Winning of the West,' Roosevelt dealt chiefly with the region beyond the Alleghanies, and with the period of the later eighteenth century, although he prefaced his account with an excellent chapter describing the backwoods-men of the Alleghanies and their social conditions from 1769 to 1774. It is important to notice, however, that he is concerned with a backwoods society already formed; that he ignores the New England frontier and its part in the winning of the West, and does not recognize that there was a West to be won between New England and the Great Lakes. In short, he is interested in the winning of the West beyond the Alleghanies by the southern half of the frontier folk.¹⁴

In Dutcher's A Guide to Historical Literature, the review was written by St. George Leakin Sioussat, professor of American history, University of Pennsylvania:

Most important of Roosevelt's historical writings; vividly describes the westward movement across the Alleghanies and into the Mississippi valley and beyond, from the years following the peace of 1763 through the explorations of Lewis and Clark and of Pike. Highly expressive of Roosevelt's vigor and of his strong likes and dislikes; based on much research, especially in the great collections of western materials; weaker on diplomatic side; neglects the materials in the British Public Record Office.¹⁵

Sioussat believes that of all the chapters in the four volumes, the later ones have the least originality.

Gamaliel Bradford wrote a different type of paragraph review in his Harper's story during 1931. This gave thought to the reason, possibly, why Roosevelt wrote at length on Indian wars and frontier military campaigns:

Undoubtedly the fiercest and most enthralling excitement of all is the military, just plain fighting; and military matters had a fascination for Roosevelt from start to finish. He loved the study of technical military details, all of them, the description of weapons, the intricate

¹⁴ Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York: Holt, 1921), p. 67.

¹⁵ George Matthew Dutcher, A Guide to Historical Literature (New York: Macmillan, 1931), p. 1025.

analysis of maneuvers. His first literary work was a History of the Naval War of 1812, with minute accounts of all the naval battles, and in his later Winning of the West it is evident that the virile fighting of those hardy, rugged borderers and wanderers was what appealed to him most and what he narrated with most vigor.¹⁶

He also stated that Roosevelt was an interested admirer of great soldiers, such as Cromwell, Napoleon, Lee, and Grant. This was consistent with his writing about such frontier soldiers as Sevier, Clark, Wayne, and others.

This sentence, written by Harry Elmer Barnes, brings us to Roosevelt's imperialistic ideals: "Theodore Roosevelt . . . in The Winning of the West, describes the process of American expansion westward with the buoyant and ill concealed pride of an admirer of the west and an ardent patriot and national imperialist."¹⁷

From a historiographical viewpoint, Harrison John Thornton in the Jernegan Essays first compared him to Francis Parkman: "Like Francis Parkman, he knew from personal contact the country with which he was dealing, having traveled through it, sometimes on horse back."¹⁸ This author believed that when Roosevelt's writings were placed before the "great models of historiography, it was not difficult to detect their faults." Composition was usually rapid and too little time was taken in review and re-writing. Several of his books were written with the "shallowest

¹⁶ Gamaliel Bradford, "The Fury of Living: Theodore Roosevelt," Harper's, February, 1931, p. 355.

¹⁷ Harry Elmer Barnes, A History of Historical Writing (Norman, Okla.: Univ. of Okla. Press, 1937), p. 233.

¹⁸ Hutchinson (ed.), Jernegan Essays, p. 237.

of research." At the same time he claimed, "Roosevelt wrote too much on too many subjects and divided his interest and energy far too greatly ever to permit him to become a historian of first eminence," he also made this comment:

But in evaluating the work of Theodore Roosevelt in American historiography, it is unfair merely to complain that he did not write superlative history. Rather we should gratefully acknowledge that such a man wrote history at all, and on the whole, wrote it so well. . . . He wrote in youth and vigor, in sorrow, sickness, and age, and under the handicap of defective eyesight. And, with all his writing, he remained a man of action in the full glare of the national and world spotlight. These things are to be remembered as we pass judgement on his work, and these also: that his public labors carried him to the presidency of the United States and that the historians of America made him president of the American Historical Association.¹⁹

Michael Kraus has written in his treatise on historiography that Roosevelt's works appealed to the general reader: "The dramatic and the picturesque, rather than the institutional, usually interested Roosevelt, and because of that very fact his work had much to offer the general reader." Kraus maintained that the inclusion of American imperialism weakened Roosevelt's attempt to make history literature, and marred the value of his achievements in this field.²⁰

In his book, Power and Responsibility, William Henry Harbaugh wrote that The Winning of the West "stamped its author as a historian of genuine distinction: of brilliant, though uneven, literary power; of broad, and often acute, comprehension; and of

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 250-251.

²⁰ Michael Kraus, The Writings of American History (Norman, Okla.: Univ. of Okla. Press, 1953), pp. 277-278.

extraordinary narrative force." Some of the faults of The Winning of the West may be better understood by this statement made by Roosevelt to Frederick Jackson Turner and quoted by Harbaugh: "I have always been more interested in the men themselves than in the institutions through and under which they worked."²¹ This may be the reason why he neglected economic and institutional history. Harbaugh felt that The Winning of the West was a pioneering effort in writing of the advance westward of the American people. Roosevelt, to him, is a "major historian of the narrative school."²²

These authors, from 1896 to 1961, have given varied opinions as to Roosevelt's works. We need now to try and evaluate the importance he placed on the state of Franklin in relation to frontier history. This may lead us to ascertain his competence as a Franklin historian.

²¹ William Henry Harbaugh, Power and Responsibility, the Life and Times of Theodore Roosevelt (New York: Farran, Straus and Cudahy, 1961), pp. 56-57.

²² Ibid.

CHAPTER III

ROOSEVELT AS A FRANKLIN HISTORIAN

In an attempt to make some type of comparison as to the state of Franklin and other subjects found in The Winning of the West, I constructed a table to give an indication of the pages spent on various topics. Sixteen topics or subjects, were chosen at random to see if the author placed emphasis on certain phases of frontier history. Each page of the text of the books, excluding prefaces, appendices, and indexes, was examined for content as pertaining to the sixteen topics.

TABLE 1.
PAGES OF TOPICS FOUND
IN THE WINNING OF THE WEST

Topics	Pages in 4 vol.
Indian wars and battles	450
Frontier politics	206
Frontier life	148
Frontier government	106
Revolutionary War on frontier	96
Frontier leaders	89
Movement of population	69
Explorers	61
State of Franklin	50
Indian life	26
State governments	25
Indian tribes and government	21
Frontier religions	18
Indian leaders	10
Frontier towns	9
Frontier education	7

In a general comparison such as this, there would naturally be some overlapping of topics. To cite some examples of this; first, some of the pages in the chapter on the state of Franklin

could have been put under the topic "Indian wars and battles." A number of the pages indicated in the "Indian wars and battles" might have been listed under "Revolutionary War on the frontier." The reason for the large number of pages in "Frontier politics" is because the pages dealing with the Dutch, English, and Spanish intrigues were included in this section.

As general as this table may be, this writer does not believe this overlapping makes it invalid. Roosevelt, as any author, had certain areas that were more interesting to him than others. It would be natural that he placed emphasis on certain phases which attracted him because his research was directed toward that end.

The topic, "Frontier government," was significant in the first two volumes. Although not in any great detail, Roosevelt wrote concerning governments such as those found in the Watauga commonwealth, the conquered French settlements, early Kentucky, and the Cumberland settlements. Again, some of these pages might have been listed under "frontier leaders," or "Frontier life." Some of the pages on the execution of frontier justice were written in a narrative form that could be taken as episodes of frontier life.

The table lists only twenty-six pages for "Indian tribes and government," and only a few pages on "Indian leaders." In most cases these subjects were interwoven into the many chapters dealing with the "Indian wars and battles." Such Indian chieftains as Logan, Cornstalk, Dragging Canoe, Big Foot, McGillivray, and others, were written directly into the narrative. Many of the Indian tribes were mentioned but only when they were involved in

skirmishes with the white man.

The battle of King's Mountain was emphasized in the second volume in relation to the space devoted to the Revolutionary War. "Movement of population" was important to Roosevelt because it brought about the mixture of peoples and gave the frontier its distinctive characteristics. "Frontier religions" and "Frontier education" were discussed where they were relative to the life of the frontiersman. "State governments" did not appear until after the passage of the necessary land laws, so was included in the text after the enactment of the Ordinance of 1787. He discussed the establishment and growth of "State governments" where such was important to the broader development of the great frontier.

As indicated by this table, 450 pages were spent on Indian wars and battles." This would seem to give a fair indication that Roosevelt was interested in this type of history. In relation to total text pages in the entire four volumes, this would be 32.3 per cent spent on this topic alone. The next highest number of pages was listed under the topic "Frontier politics." The percentage here is not such an accurate indicator because of the inclusion of the pages dealing with the various intrigues. Possibly the topic should have been "Foreign intrigues" rather than the one used, because approximately one half of the pages were spent on intrigues. This would have included such things as the Wilkinson intrigues, the Burr conspiracy, and others. The topic which ranked third was "Frontier life." This included

social life as well as the way the settlers lived and traveled. The percentage figure here, in relation to the 1391 pages of the text, is 10.6. Roosevelt had a special interest in this subject because his original living quarters at the Bad Lands' ranch were typical frontier buildings. Now if we put some of these pages and percentages together, we can ascertain even more the significance of some of these topics to the whole work.

If we group these three topics together, "Indian wars and battles," "Frontier life," and "Revolutionary War on the frontier," we have a total of 694 pages. This lacks just a few pages of being 50 per cent--49.89 per cent to be more exact. Then if we were to add "Indian leaders" and "Indian life" to this we would be well over the 50 per cent mark. This has demonstrated what the major interests of the author were.

Now to look at the state of Franklin in relation to the total number of pages. The chapter on the state of Franklin has fifty pages for its total. In percentage of the total text, this is 3.5. At first notice, this would seem to be a small percentage of the total pages, but it must be kept in mind that the state had political meaning for only approximately four years. If we take into consideration the time period involved in the pages of The Winning of the West, approximately forty-five years, we find that the state of Franklin occupied only 8.8 per cent of that time period.

This would lead us to believe that Roosevelt did not particularly stress the state of Franklin, but that he did consider

it an important part of the history of this period. Some of this importance can be understood by quoting a few lines from his work. In the last paragraph of the preface to the third volume we find these sentences:

The rifle-bearing freemen who founded their little republics on the western waters, gradually solved the question of combining personal liberty with national union. For years there was much wavering. There were violent separatist movements, and attempts to establish complete independence of the eastern States. There were corrupt conspiracies between some of the western leaders and various high Spanish officials to bring about a disruption of the Confederation. The extraordinary little backwoods state of Franklin began and ended a career unique in our annals. But the current, though eddying and sluggish, set towards Union. By 1790 a firm government had been established west of the mountains, and the trans-Alleghany commonwealths had become parts of the Federal Union.¹

His inclusion of comment on the state of Franklin in the preface to this volume would give some indication as to the importance which the author placed on the commonwealth's existence.

Roosevelt was impressed by the individualism of the frontiersmen as they established their particular governments. It was his opinion that the "real work was done by the settlers themselves."² The systems of governments were constructed without the aid of the parent state and were responsible for keeping the settlements together until a territory or new state was set up. Roosevelt went so far as to say: "The distinguishing feature in the exploration, settlement, and up-building of Kentucky and Tennessee was the individual initiative of the backwoodsmen."³

¹ Theodore Roosevelt, The Winning of the West (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1894), III, iv.

² Ibid., p. 232.

³ Ibid.

Roosevelt, as far as we can tell from the table and by these statements, was not attempting to specialize as a Franklin historian. The state occupied a specific spot in the history of this part of the frontier and he inserted it, without going into a great amount of detail, at the proper place. It seems that the influence on the frontier was inferred, rather than stated. Other areas were watching Franklin and had not a system been worked out by Congress for the admission of new states to the Federal Republic, the influence of this insurrectionary commonwealth might have been greater.

There does not seem to be any hesitancy on the part of Roosevelt to differ in his interpretation of various aspects of the period with other authors. Not too much had been written on the state of Franklin prior to his work, and the majority of authors on general American history did not mention, or just briefly mentioned, the temporary state. Roosevelt felt that James G. M. Ramsey and his Annals of Tennessee, published in 1853,⁴ was "the best authority for the history of the curious state of Franklin."⁵ He also explained that Ramsey wrote at length about the state of Franklin but the background history was from John Haywood and his Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee, originally published in 1823 and then

⁴ James G. M. Ramsey, Annals of Tennessee (Charleston: 1853).

⁵ Roosevelt, III, 155, n.

re-published again in 1891.⁶ Roosevelt goes on to say that Haywood is "the original, and by far the most valuable authority on Tennessee matters."⁷ There was another writer who published a book on Sevier in 1887. This man was James Robert Gilmore who wrote under the pseudonym, Edmund Kirke.⁸ Roosevelt and Gilmore became embroiled in an argument about their books which we will discuss later in this section. The book by Samuel Cole Williams, History of the Lost State of Franklin, which is considered authoritative, was published in 1924.⁹ These works mentioned, along with Roosevelt's, have been considered as the most reliable studies of this frontier period. This did not prevent them from disagreeing on various points.

One of the interesting episodes in the Indian situation, during the existence of the state of Franklin, was involved with the murder of the Kirk family, near Knoxville, in 1788. Not only does this show a difference in narrative, but it also shows how Roosevelt permits his feelings to color his writing.

The story of the murder was simple enough to tell, and the various authors mentioned, went along together with this part of the tale. One day when the father, John Kirk and his eldest boy

⁶ John Haywood, The Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee (Nashville, Tenn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1891).

⁷ Roosevelt, III, 159, n.

⁸ Edmund Kirke [James Robert Gilmore], John Sevier as a Commonwealth-Builder (New York: Appleton, 1887).

⁹ Samuel Cole Williams, History of the Lost State of Franklin (Johnson City, Tenn.: Watauga Press, 1924).

were away from home, Slim Tom, an Indian well known to the family and thought to be friendly, came to the cabin. He asked for food but his real mission was to spy out the home and then report to a party of redskins who were hiding in the forest. When Slim Tom realized there were no men present, he reported to his cohorts and they immediately fell on the family, leaving eleven murdered in the door yard. Young John Kirk, Jr. vowed that he would get revenge, and Roosevelt, writing at length on the happening said: "It would have been well had the lad been among the slain, for his coarse and brutal nature was roused . . . and shortly afterwards he figured as chief actor in a deed of retaliation as revolting and inhuman as the original crime."¹⁰

A brief summary of the act of revenge reads like this. John Kirk, Jr. was a captain in what was known as the "Bloody Rangers" that fought for John Sevier. Sevier, at this time, made a foray into Indian country and came to the Tennessee River where a small town of Cherokees occupied the far bank. There were a number of chiefs in the town, and by the use of a white flag, several of the Indian leaders, including Corn Tassel, a well-known friend of the whites, were induced to come over to the camp and talk. No sooner had they arrived than they were taken prisoners, put into a hut, and then murdered by John Kirk. These are the basic facts of the story and the difference in interpretation by various authors is here included.

¹⁰ Roosevelt, III, 186.

Roosevelt used the name Corn Tassel and wrote that Sevier himself put the chiefs and their retinue in the hut. He stated that Sevier's friends said he was absent at the time of the murder, but Roosevelt did not accept this as an excuse.¹¹

Haywood wrote that Sevier was not a man who was cruel and had "never been accused of inhumanity; and he could not have given his consent on this occasion."¹²

Kirke (Gilmore) expounded at great length on this affair and differed greatly with Roosevelt. He wrote that Sevier found this village nearly deserted so he left a Major Hubbard in charge and went in pursuit of the missing Indians. Gilmore stated that it was a chief by the name of Abraham who brought Old Tassel (not Corn Tassel as Roosevelt used) across the river, and that it was both Hubbard and Kirk who murdered them. When Sevier returned, according to this author, he severely rebuked both Kirk and Hubbard, but could do nothing more because the frontiersmen approved of the act.¹³

Williams, in his book, claimed that Kirk acquitted Sevier, and in a footnote he included a letter that John Kirk, Jr. wrote to John Watts, a chief of the Cherokee Nation, in which Kirk took full responsibility for the deed. This letter appeared in the Georgia State Gazette, April 25, 1789.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid., p. 190.

¹² Haywood, p. 196.

¹³ Kirke [Gilmore], pp. 176-180.

¹⁴ Williams, p. 208, n.

This was a good example of Roosevelt writing narrative with a flourish. He was so incensed at the story that he called it "Sevier's crime." He stated that it was criminal negligence on the part of Sevier to leave these men when he knew how they felt. Young Kirk was placed in the same category with Slim Tom and he was "the low-class, brutal white borderer, whose inhumanity equalled that of the savage." Then Roosevelt wrote that Sevier, a follower of Washington and a member of the Order of Cincinnati, must be severely condemned. "He sank to the level of a lieutenant of Alva, Guise, or Tilly, to the level of a crusading noble of the middle ages."¹⁵ And with these flourishing statements he wrote that the act was condemned by all the better class of frontiersmen, Congress, and the officials of the State of North Carolina.

Other examples of discrepancies could be used, such as the story of Sevier's escape from the trial at Morganton; the use of the title Frankland or Franklin, for the state name; the influence of the Tipton-Sevier feud; and so on. Indications are, that with these, Roosevelt, in most cases tried to remain as neutral as possible and did not take the more romantic episodes and write a great amount of trivia about them. He had emphatic feelings and thoughts as to the white man's treatment of the Indians and he gave vent to his feeling in writing the Kirk murder episode. Roosevelt did not condone the acts of barbarism by the whites but accepted the reduction of the Indian as one of the costs of

¹⁵ Roosevelt, III, 191.

civilization. The story of Sevier's escape from trial had several romantic angles but Roosevelt kept to the report given by Haywood and just briefly footnoted the romantic story that Ramsey gave about his escape from the open court on his famous racing mare.¹⁶

Roosevelt was not reluctant to use trivia; if he wanted to write at length on a certain part, or had personal feelings on the subject, his pen flowed freely. If the topic was general in its subject, his sentences were usually straightforward, but interesting. In a letter to William Frederick Poole, he wrote that he was "especially aiming in his history to present the important facts, and . . . avoid being drowned in a mass of detail." He said it was difficult to find the middle between hastiness and "intolerable antiquarian minuteness."¹⁷ Even with the above statement; if he wanted to write at length on the matter, he did! An example would be the pages that he wrote on the "Indian wars and battles." Many pages are spent on the experiences of certain individuals and their capture, treatment, and escape or death, at the hands of the Indians. Some of the details in these episodes are quite minute. These added much to the colorful narrative and are especially interesting to the general reader. Some of these personal experiences with the Indians are not found in other sources.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁷ Elting E. Morison (ed.), The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1951), I, 202.

Criticism of Roosevelt's works was not limited to published reviews. In the New York Sun in September, 1889, there appeared a letter signed "Cumberland." This was a severe criticism of Roosevelt's first two volumes on the West.¹⁸ Roosevelt wrote to Charles A. Dana, the publisher of the Sun, and vigorously responded to "Cumberland's" comments. He realized that "Cumberland" was James R. Gilmore and said so in his letter. After refuting such charges that he had used printed manuscripts and reported them as original, he attacked the statement that caused him the most concern. "Cumberland" had written to great length that Roosevelt did not write the entire first two volumes, but hired another unknown person to do the work. He claimed that Roosevelt, because of the shortness of time involved, could have not written the entire manuscript. At this juncture, Roosevelt offered "a thousand dollars, . . . at once to Cumberland, or Edmund Kirke, or Mr. Gilmore, or to anyone else" who could show and prove that this accusation was true. Here is a quote of the last sentence of the letter: "I challenge Cumberland to come out over his own name and substantiate his charge--a charge all the meaner because it is as much innuendo as direct assertion; and until he does thus substantiate it I brand him as a coward who dares not sign his name to the lying slander he has penned."¹⁹

Roosevelt felt that this was an argument that arose over a private affair. The two men had had friendly, personal

¹⁸ Ibid., I, 188.

¹⁹ Ibid., I, 191-192.

correspondence during the writing of the first two volumes of The Winning of the West. Roosevelt had, at first, been charmed with the books of Gilmore, but as he came to study them he realized they were in the most part, fiction and generally untrustworthy. These facts he stated in the Appendix to Volume I.²⁰ This was to Roosevelt the reason for the "Cumberland" letter.

Roosevelt's first letter was answered in the Sun during the first part of October, 1889, and was signed by James R. Gilmore. No acceptance was made of the reward that was offered. This letter was answered by Roosevelt on October 10, 1889, and was again sent to Charles A. Dana, castigating Gilmore for not being "honest and decent."²¹

In relation to his own books and sources, Roosevelt felt that they were honest and trustworthy. When he wrote to Francis Parkman asking permission to dedicate the work to him, it was written this way: "Of course I know that you would not wish your name to be connected in even the most indirect way with any but good work; and I can only say that I will do my best to make it a creditable one."²² He wanted the reader to be able to enjoy the text and still have assurance that what he was reading was accurate.

There are inaccuracies in The Winning of the West. One of these is of special interest to the student of frontier history, particularly as it involves the mention of Frederick Jackson

²⁰ Roosevelt, I, 339-341.

²¹ Morison, I, 194-197.

²² Ibid., I, 140.

Turner and his frontier thesis. In Volume III, Roosevelt had a footnote which came after a discussion of the influence of the frontiersmen on the community that remained when the frontier moved west. In this note he wrote: "Frederick Jackson Turner: 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History.' A suggestive pamphlet, published by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin."²³ The reference to Turner in Volume IV places him at the wrong university and uses an incorrect initial. This footnote comes after this sentence in the text: "At the end of the eighteenth century, and during the early years of the nineteenth, the important fact to be remembered in treating of Westerners was their fundamental unity, in blood, in ways of life, and in habits of thought." Here is the mistaken footnote: "Prof. Frederick A. Turner, of the University of Michigan, deserves special credit for the stress he had laid upon this point."²⁴ Later these two men became well acquainted, and Turner was a guest at the White House.

Roosevelt agreed with Turner on many of the theories that the latter brought out in his thesis. In many sections of the volumes on the West, Roosevelt seemed to be writing with the Turner thesis in mind, but at that time the influence of the two men had not become that important to each other. To Turner, several of the frontier traits were democracy, freedom, strength, and individualism, and Roosevelt agreed with him. Even with this

²³ Roosevelt, III, 208.

²⁴ Roosevelt, IV, 220.

in mind it is difficult to decide whether Roosevelt actually comprehended the significance of the frontier. He wrote many lines on the necessity of territorial expansion but his lines were few on topics developed from the reforms of the frontier movement.

At this point we may conclude that Roosevelt was not an historian of the state of Franklin, but retold the story of the frontier commonwealth as part of the duty of the frontier historian. It would seem that the life of John Sevier and his skirmishes with the Indians were more important to this Dakota rancher than the little insurrectionary government that almost brought universal manhood suffrage and freedom of worship to the frontier. Roosevelt was a narrative historian who attempted to make his history literature.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

The chapter on the state of Franklin, in Volume IV of The Winning of the West, has, in the main, withstood the critique of time. The works published on this topic since the appearance of his chapter and volume, agree in most part with what Roosevelt had written. This basic work of the frontier commonwealth that he wrote during the 1880's still appears in publications of the present day. It is evident that his volumes have become a definite repository for sources and source material of this frontier period. Roosevelt did not attempt to be classed as an historian of the state of Franklin, but his work in this area would now seem to rank him, in a small way, with John Haywood¹ and James G. M. Ramsey.² The later works on this topic, whether books or articles about this frontier government frequently cite Roosevelt along with Ramsey and Haywood, although the latter two are used more frequently.

It is possible to show, by comparison with recent authors, that, in most cases, Roosevelt was accurate in the recording of Franklin affairs. Two books have appeared in the past three years that have contained studies on the state of Franklin. In 1959, Bobbs-Merrill published John Anthony Caruso's, The

¹ John Haywood, Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1891).

² James G. M. Ramsey, The Annals of Tennessee (Charleston: 1853).

Appalachian Frontier.³ In 1960, the MacManus Company of Philadelphia, published The Fourteenth Commonwealths; Vermont and the States that Failed, by William Brewster.⁴ Using these two books, it is possible to evaluate to some extent the assertion Roosevelt made that he was writing accurate history.

Without trying to ascertain the amount of emphasis the two writers placed on the use of Roosevelt as source material, it is interesting to notice the number of times The Winning of the West appears in footnotes of their works. Brewster used three footnote references to Roosevelt in eight chapters covering eighty-one pages. He wrote almost entirely in the realm of the story as related by Ramsey and Haywood. In these eight chapters the author included one chapter on the Southern frontier and one chapter on the Watauga commonwealth which included the battle of King's Mountain. Caruso wrote one chapter entitled, "Franklin, the Lost State" which fills thirty pages. In these pages he referred to Roosevelt, in footnotes, eight times.

The above figures are not evaluated here, but are given to indicate that The Winning of the West is alluded to for information about this frontier event. The real critique of Roosevelt's Franklin chapter would be: does present-day writing agree with his facts presented about the state of Franklin?

³ John Anthony Caruso, The Appalachian Frontier (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959).

⁴ William Brewster, The Fourteenth Commonwealths; Vermont and the States that Failed (Philadelphia: MacManus, 1960).

Roosevelt felt that the parent state of North Carolina, when it first realized the extent of the separatist feeling, was as anxious to get rid of the trans-mountain people as they were to go.⁵ Brewster wrote that the eastern leaders of the state could see no substantial benefit from a continued connection, and realized it would be just a matter of time until the western counties did separate.⁶ Caruso stated that along with refusing to aid the frontiersmen in protection of their homes against the ravages of the Indians, the easterners often referred to them as "'off-scourings of the earth', 'fugitives', and 'outlaws'."⁷

When the first convention met to organize the state of Franklin, August 23, 1784, Roosevelt claimed that "forty deputies, or thereabouts" were present.⁸ Brewster listed forty men by name who were most of the distinguished and "influential leaders of East Tennessee."⁹ Caruso wrote that the convention met at the time designated, but did not list the number or the names of the delegates.¹⁰ This author's chapter on the state of Franklin is interesting and well written, but it is not as detailed as is Brewster's or Roosevelt's.

⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, The Winning of the West (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1894), III, 154.

⁶ Brewster, p. 172.

⁷ Caruso, p. 286.

⁸ Roosevelt, III, 157.

⁹ Brewster, p. 175.

¹⁰ Caruso, p. 288.

There is some difference of opinion between two of these authors as to the cause of the split between delegates over the problem of independence or allegiance to North Carolina. Roosevelt felt that the division originated in the first convention in August when the minority of delegates, led by John Tipton, voted against the declaration of independence taking effect at once.¹¹ Brewster wrote a general conclusion that there seemed to be an amount of confusion as to the actual place, time, and proceedings of these conventions. He quoted directly from Haywood to the effect that there was complete unity among the leaders at this first convention.¹² Caruso did not discuss the problem until he brought up the Sevier-Tipton feud in relation to the Franklin constitutional convention.¹³ This does not seem to be a disagreement of actual facts between Roosevelt and Brewster, but rather a difference in organization of the chapters. Roosevelt did not footnote this topic so his source material is not known, although he emphasized factionalism more than Brewster did.

There was general agreement among the three writers that Sevier, at first, was not completely in favor of the new state. Roosevelt wrote that, after the North Carolina act of western cession was repealed "Sevier himself counselled his fellow

¹¹ Roosevelt, III, 158.

¹² Brewster, p. 179.

¹³ Caruso, p. 294.

citizens to abandon the movement for a new state."¹⁴ Brewster stated that even as late as January, 1785, Sevier had little enthusiasm for the independence movement and was trying to extricate himself from these entanglements. Brewster quoted this from a letter that John Sevier wrote after he had been made a general of the militia in the formation of the Washington District by North Carolina: "January 2, 1785; . . . 'I conclude this step will satisfy the people with the old state and we shall pursue no further measures as to a new state'."¹⁵ It appeared that Caruso may have come the closest to understanding the personal feelings of Sevier. Caruso wrote that the reason for Sevier opposing the movement was his interest in land speculation. He stated his opinion that Sevier opposed the movement until he was reasonably sure that it could succeed without his support, and then he would enter into it. "Thus he anticipated complete success for his political as well as for his business plans."¹⁶ There is no evidence that Roosevelt considered land speculation significant in this context.

It is not the purpose of this paper to bring out the errors of these authors, but one discrepancy follows through all three. Roosevelt continually used the term "Continental Congress" in his chapter on Franklin, and so does Caruso. Brewster uses both "Continental Congress" and "Congress of the United States."

¹⁴ Roosevelt, p. 159.

¹⁵ Brewster, p. 184.

¹⁶ Caruso, pp. 289-290.

The greater portion of this history took place during the period of the Confederation. The Articles of Confederation were ratified March 1, 1781. Before this date the assembly was known as the Continental Congress; after this date, until March 4, 1789, when the Congress of the United States first met under the Constitution, it was the Congress of the Confederation.¹⁷ To complicate this as to problems of authenticity, here is a footnote from The Winning of the West, III, page 162: "State Dept. MSS., Papers Continental Congress, Memorials, etc. No. 48. State of Franklin, March 12, 1785." This would seem to indicate that even the State Department was titling their manuscripts with "Continental Congress" during the period of the Confederation.

The two later authors did not seem concerned with the problems between the state of Franklin and Virginia. Roosevelt was emphatic in his belief that Sevier wanted as good relations with Virginia as with the Congress. He quoted from a letter written by Sevier to Patrick Henry, Governor of Virginia, found in the file of the Virginia State Papers.¹⁸ His use of these papers gave evidence of the scope of Roosevelt's research. His study was extensive but not always deep.

There was almost complete agreement among these authors that one of the reasons for the discontent with North Carolina was the Indian problem. Roosevelt wrote that it was involved in

¹⁷ "Congress, Continental," Encyclopedia Americana, VII (1956), p. 510.

¹⁸ Roosevelt, III, 164 n.

the delay in making an "advantageous treaty" with the Indians.¹⁹ He did not write of the Treaty of Hopewell, signed by the federal government and the Cherokee, but stated that the treaty which followed, signed by the Franklinites, was one of "mere piracy."²⁰ These people were well known for their disregard of Indian treaties. This emphatic wording was also directed toward the attempt by the Franklin assembly to establish a colony at Muscle Shoals. It might well have been directed at North Carolina because the lack of interest in aiding the frontiersmen against the Indians evolved around business ventures in Indian controlled land.

Brewster and Caruso agreed with Roosevelt that the constitution proposed by the Tipton forces and rejected by the convention, was a document that showed the influence of the frontier. All three realized that it was extremely liberal but only Caruso realized, or wrote, that there was politics involved in presenting this document. Because of its liberal policy of manhood suffrage, this would have put a democratic form of government in the hands of the people. Tipton and his forces believed that this would cause the downfall of Sevier and his associates.²¹ It is possible that the progressive features of this document did not appear to Roosevelt to be an indication of progressive government which could arise from frontier democracy.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 165.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 166.

²¹ Caruso, pp. 295-296.

Previous to these two above-mentioned volumes by Brewster and Caruso, Judge Samuel Cole Williams, former Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court, wrote, in 1924, a major work in this field. Entitled, History of the Lost State of Franklin, the first edition was published by the Watauga Press, Johnson City, Tennessee. Judge Williams lived for more than a generation in Washington County, which was the leading county of the state of Franklin.

A paragraph found in the preface to his book gives us a better understanding of the relationship of the various authors, especially Haywood, Ramsey, and Roosevelt:

There can be no excuse for an historical work which merely revamps and repeats what Haywood and Ramsey wrote, though the histories of those writers are now out of print. Any one who attempts to write of the early history of Tennessee will find himself debtor to both. Ramsey borrowed heavily from Haywood; but he had access to materials that his predecessor had not--documents handed down by his father, Francis A. Ramsey, Sevier, and other Franklin leaders. However, Ramsey wrote long before valuable source materials had been made accessible, in the archives of Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia. Coming later into the field, Roosevelt in preparing his Winning of the West was enabled to draw in a measure upon such ampler stores of information which had then been assembled, and arranged for consultation by his--
 torical students.²²

On the points discussed above there was general agreement between Roosevelt and Williams. The main difference was in the style of writing. Williams did not include as much narrative filler but wrote more factually. He corrected Roosevelt in several instances, but it appeared to be in situations where

²² Samuel Cole Williams, History of the Lost State of Franklin (Johnson City, Tenn.: Watauga Press, 1924), p. ix.

Roosevelt had worked up a particular enthusiasm over personal feelings toward the subject. Williams did agree with Roosevelt that the writings of Gilmore were, for the main part, unreliable.²³

These few examples indicate that the factual text of Roosevelt's chapter on the state of Franklin generally has stood the critique of time. But can we conclude from this that he was especially interested in what took place in this frontier commonwealth? It is granted that he was not attempting to write a complete and comprehensive work on Franklin, but was placing it in his narrative at the proper place in regards to the overall frontier history. The previous table (p. 28) would affirm that he had other interests than the institutions composing frontier government.

Indian wars, feuds, personalities, and a frontier political movement in conflict with the Eastern government drew his attention in the main and consumed the bulk of space devoted to Franklin. People and events tended to push aside institutions in his account of the "fourteenth commonwealth." An example of this would be the treatment of the Indian conflicts which involved Sevier and his so-called "crime."

There was scarcely any attempt on Roosevelt's part to assess the general significance of this short-lived state of Franklin as an experiment in government or to relate it to the broader pages of United States history. He referred to Sevier and his

²³ Ibid., p. 173.

movement as a "frontier revolt"²⁴ but did not mention other frontier revolts as Bacon's Rebellion, the Regulator movement, Shay's uprising, the rampage of the Paxson Boys, the Whiskey Rebellion, and later movements of a like kind. In comparison with the above mentioned it would seem that the Franklin movement was more a matter of frontier discontent generated by the absence of effective government, rather than a frontier revolt.²⁵

At the same time, one should not conclude that Roosevelt was blind to all the subtle forces at play on the Franklin frontier. He referred to the conflict between the civilized and the primitive on this frontier.²⁶ This was not surprising since the struggle against barbarism (on the frontier) was one which had long been noted across the pages of history and literature. Frederick Jackson Turner was in the process of making his thesis known at the time this frontier history was being published. Evidently Roosevelt did not come into contact with Turner until after the first two volumes were published. In February, 1894, Roosevelt wrote to Turner that he was interested in his pamphlet on the frontier and was going to make use of it in writing his

²⁴ Roosevelt, III, 172.

²⁵ Roosevelt did not make any comparison of this early frontier discontent with the agrarian discontent that was taking place during the 1890's. The Populist revolt was felt in the midwest at the time Roosevelt wrote his history of the state of Franklin. This would indicate that he was more concerned with what had transpired in the past than he was with its significance for the events that were taking place around him. Most of the Populist ideas were soon to be incorporated in the platform of Roosevelt's Progressive Party.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 176.

third volume.²⁷ There was further correspondence and eventually the men did meet. This would indicate that at least Roosevelt had read the Turner thesis before the writing of the third and fourth volumes. Considering the time element when the particular works were published, Turner gained from Roosevelt more than Roosevelt gained from Turner. This does not imply that Roosevelt had any significant influence over Turner. The latter did not single out this point for special note in any of his reviews of The Winning of the West.

Roosevelt did not see Franklin in its broader context or its political significance in the westward movement of American history. He did not indicate whether or not this particular frontier experiment was a notable one, but he respected the leaders involved. Likewise the Franklin development was not, for him, clearly backwoods agrarian insurrection against the eastern seaboard with its commercial and professional classes. The Franklin history was, for him, primarily a romantic interlude carried out on the edge of the Anglo-American society of that day. He saw it as another extension of the American people westward.

²⁷ Etling F. Morison, The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1951), I, 363.

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THEODORE ROOSEVELT, FRANKLIN HISTORIAN

by

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Of great national popularity were the four volumes of Theodore Roosevelt, which were published between 1889 and 1896 under the title The Winning of the West. Roosevelt had removed himself from the politics of supporting Blaine in the presidential campaign of 1884, by going west. He was captivated by western life and in time produced several books about it. The Winning of the West evolved primarily around the early trans-Appalachian frontier, and was basically a narrative of Indian wars and the Revolution. These books definitely increased interest in western history, but Roosevelt limited his work to a single frontier and was little concerned with the peculiar contributions of the West to national culture. This study primarily considers a chapter in volume three, about a frontier commonwealth, the state of Franklin, and Roosevelt's treatment of it.

There had been considerable discussion among the settlers south of the Ohio during 1782 to 1784, as to the desirability of a more effective government in the region. In 1784, the North Carolina assembly voted to cede its western land to the Confederation Congress and this action initiated the movement toward establishment of an independent state government. The most influential man in the Holston-Watauga area was John Sevier, and his early counsel of moderation kept the movement from getting out of hand. This independence agitation culminated in the Jonesboro Convention, which on December 14, 1784, declared the independence of the Holston region. The insurrectionary commonwealth was given the name of Franklin, and a temporary constitution provided for a

Senate and a House of Commons, which jointly were to elect a governor. The legislature first met in March, 1785, at which time John Sevier was elected governor. With the acceptance of a permanent constitution in November, 1785, based on that of North Carolina, the state started to operate as an independent commonwealth. The trouble which finally toppled Franklin was internal rather than external. John Tipton, Sevier's chief political rival, was finally able to arrest Sevier and take him to trial at Morganton, on the charge of high treason. He escaped from the court before conviction, but the affair resulted in the collapse of Franklin.

There were only two historians who wrote at length on the state of Franklin before Roosevelt, and they both dealt with Tennessee history. The background history appeared with John Haywood's Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee, published first in 1823 and then again in 1891. James G. M. Ramsey published his Annals of Tennessee in 1853 and Roosevelt felt this was the better of the two in relation to the "curious state of Franklin." Ramsey used Haywood for much of the basic history but was able to include later source material.

After Roosevelt's third volume (1894) was published, the next inclusive study of the state of Franklin did not appear until 1924. This was Samuel Cole Williams', History of the Lost State of Franklin. He corrected all three previous writers, brought out new source material, and added to the general knowledge of the frontier state.

Two recent authors have included the history of this unique government in their books. Bobbs-Merrill Company, in 1959, brought out John Anthony Caruso's, The Appalachian Frontier, which contained a good chapter study of the state of Franklin, and the MacManus Company published in 1960, The Fourteenth Commonwealth, Vermont and the States that Failed, by William Brewster. His work contained eight chapters on Franklin which was nearly equal to the space used on this subject by Roosevelt in his volume.

In the brief comparison made by this paper, Roosevelt's general subject matter stood up well with those writers who preceded him. An attempt was made, by the use of a table, to account for the amount of text space he used on various topics throughout The Winning of the West. The chapter on the state of Franklin followed the pattern of the entire work as it stressed Indian wars, feuds, personalities, and events of interest to Roosevelt. He drew no basic conclusions as to the significance of this experiment in frontier government to the broader pages of United States history.